THE POCAHONTAS TIMES

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CALVIN W. PRICE, EDITOR.

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This being the only diary I keep, I will endeavor to set down some of those long, long thoughts that engaged the attention last week. It was a broken week for me. I had been invited to Huntington to stand before kings, and I was commissioned to go to Morgantown to make a court sale and that meant one of those circling trips in West Virginia flying around the State as though moved by centrifugal force.

On Monday however I had a full day at home, and I was one of the representatives of the lost tribes at the home of my neighbor Simon Schuchat, a merchant prince of the house of Judea, on the occasion when Rabbi Abramowitz came all the way from Baltimore to circumcise the babe Aaron Mendel Schuchat, one of the latest arrivals in this city. It is impossible to get a quorem of orthodox Jews in this city for this rite, so a number of us disciples of Judaism made perfect, were invited, all feeling honored by the invitation. I had never assisted at this ceremony before and I was much impressed. Young Aaron, which being interpreted means The Mountaineer, appeared on a snow white pillow dressed in his finest robes. The rest of us men folks stood in a circle with our hats on. The child was passed around the circle each of us holding him, and in a way we endowed him with such virtues as we possess. A mother in Israel remarked that the baby had been held by some mighty good men, and I want to record my part of the blessing, be it ever so little or much. The service was in Hebrew. Afterwards we feasted and then the day was over.

The evening train came along and I traveled as far as Ronceverte with the Rabbi. He is a man in his forties, a native of Russia, where he was carefully schooled in his biblical studies, one of the requirements being to recite the Talmud from memory. He came to this country a number of years ago. He has eight children, the oldest being a practicing attorney in the city of Baltimore. In the operation connected with the rites and ceremonies of his faith he is pre-eminent as a specialist, the best surgeons giving way before him. I had a fine specimen of a stone scalping knife in my pocket and I presented him with it as a relic of the stone age, remotely connected with his work.

The occasion of my going to Huntington was the meeting of the state editorial association composed of publishers and printers at this time, Hon. Guy Tetrick, of Clarksburg, president, and Hon. James Weir, of Elkins, field secretary.

The first one of these I attended was in 1894, thirty years ago at Wheeling. Since then much water has flowed under the bridge. It used to be an excuse to herd together in the cities of the State but now it has come to be a serious proposition. Thirty years ago such a plant as The Times has was considered sufficient to print a daily newspaper in the city. Now with the development of the State, a city newspaper property may run to as much as a quarter of a million dollars and more. The Advertiser at Huntington can get out forty thousand copies an hour and presents to its readers a paper of the general size and makeup of a New York daily.

Huntington has grown far beyond the wildest dreams of other days. It was founded on the banks of the Ohio river six miles below the mouth of the Guyan River. At the mouth of Guyan River lay the town of Guyandotte. Huntington has reached out and absorbed that town the two places being solidly built together.

It has got clear beyond control and is growing by leaps and bounds. It is in a way a city of strangers, the new people come so fast. It seems that it is dangerous for a stranger to visit the city. He may never get home. He gets off the train and goes to a hotel. He lies down to sleep and gets up a Huntingtontonian and is found on the streets praising his new home, and trying to induce others to settle there.

The population has passed the eighty thousand mark and the one hundred thousand mark is a matter of a very short time. Once seen it is very easy to believe the assertions of the city fathers. They will soon have to put on sale the special collar cut low in the back to make it easy to observe the sky scrapers. It is too late to warn the other cities in the State as to which is to be the greatest in West Virginia. If Huntington has not already got it, it has the momentum to put it across the line.

In the old days the carefree editors of the state met and talked about words, phrases, and parts of speech. Now they talk about rates of advertising, cost clerks, automatic machinery, and labor unions. The god of Mammon has got them on the hip. The cities are challenging each to each. The front page has to appear each day and all very good. I told them in the course of my remarks that the city dailies spent too much care on the front page as compared with the other parts of the paper. That they were like "Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutored mind, clothes himself before and leaves him bare behind!"

There was considerable gloom about the impending doom that is to be meted out by Congress in the way of making newspapers pay more postage. It comes at a very inconvenient time and it will increase the overhead charge. It may be true that the public will ultimately pay but the shock first will be upon the vested interests of the newspaper plants and to a certain extent it amounts to confiscation, for these investments were not made with that extra cost in view. The inducement seems to have been a low rate of postage. Now that they have got them hooked Congress seeks to put on them unreasonable and unexpected tax. The back of the ox has been shaped for the burden.

For more than a hundred years Congress let the newspapers and other periodicals alone on the theory that the cheapest and best way to keep people informed as to the progress of the government was by the papers allowed to be distributed by mail facilities at a reasonable cost. Then some years ago Congress put a heavy postage tax on the papers, and having defied the lightning and not getting struck, they turn again to rend them.

Huntington is essentially a coal city after the manner of Pittsburgh. Its nearby coal fields are practically inexhaustible. A gentleman appeared before the printers and made the astonishing charge that West Virginia coal had proved to be so popular in the general markets of the world that coal operators of other states sought to curtail the production of coal in West Virginia by unfair means, and that one of the plans was to have union labor in West Virginia organize for the ulterior purpose of promoting strikes and thereby decreasing the output so that the mines of less favored states might sell their coal. Some thought that a resolution condemning such practices might be sufficient, but if true, it appears to be more on the order of an act of war, than any mere civil policy under color of the law.

Things like these make one reconciled to live in the woods. After the chamber of commerce had unchambered a few statistics such as eighty thousand people in one neighborhood, the best that I could say for the beautiful banks and braes of the Highlands that we had a county eighty miles long in which we had fifteen thousand people and that we could well claim that we lived in the great open spaces, where men are men.

But every great city whose image dwells on the memory of man is the type of some great idea. Rome represents conquest; faith hovers over Jerusalem; and Athens embodies the preeminent quality of the world of art; but Huntington is greater than all. It is the living exemplification of a man lifting himself over the fence by his own boot straps and consequently is the most wonderful. The fathers said let there be here a city, and so it came to pass.

Hon G. A. Northcott, President of the Chamber of Commerce, was one of the speakers at the meeting. He is a native of Clarksburg, nurtured by the Clarksburg Telegram. He struck out for himself and came over land and kept store in the mountains of Greenbrier for a time and finally landed in the early days of Huntington, and has been in the merchantile business there ever since. He finds himself now full of years and honor. My first recollection of the gentleman was seeing him presiding over the state senate in the days of Governor Dawson. He made the burden of his speech the beauty of West Virginia and the comfort of its climate. He has travelled far and wide and observed the boasted climates of such countries as California for instance where it is treason to criticise the weather. Northcott put it up to the press to sell to the world West Virginia weather and it can be done.

Huntington has between eighteen and nineteen thousand school children, so it seemed to be a sort of an anomaly that on the same night that we were making the welkin ring, that the bachelor's club was holding its annual banquet, making a virtue of necessity and calling attention to their barreness. Well, well, every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and each and every one may have a perfectly good alibi.

I came away from Huntington on the long trail north stopping over in Charleston to see that earnest historian Clifford R. Myers, the head of the bureau of archives and history in West Virginia. He is getting so well grounded in history of these mountains that it is dangerous to talk to him on the subject, for unless you know your lesson well, you may stand corrected. One of the most intimate details of history that he corrected in no uncertain way was the announcement in the dispatches in the world war of his own death. So I tell all of my brother historians to drink deep or touch not the history spring—a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Mr. Myers at the department of history has recently received a document that is of greatest interest to students of the operations of the mountain divisions during the first year of the Civil War. It is a long written report of Capt. C. S. Morgan of the Confederate forces together with an elaborate map of the battle of Greenbrier River in the fall of 1861.

The Union troops were entrenched at White Top, where the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike crosses Cheat Mountain. The Confederate forces were at Camp Bartow, then called Traveller's Repose, where they held the pike with many batteries of guns on both sides of the road.

The Confederates had pickets out down nearly as far as Durbin. Also a company of one hundred men just above the narrows where the Slavin cabin stood. In the night time the Union forces moved many of their cannon down the mountain and in the early morning they were stopped in the narrows by the Confederates and they mounted their cannon on the heights where Durbin stands now. The Confederates withdrawing their outposts by going back through the foot hills on the north side of the valley, the Union forces advanced up the East Fork of Greenbrier through the green fields until they were about where the tannery stands now, and for five hours the artillery on both sides engaged in a duel in which a number of men were killed and wounded. After five hours of continuous cannonading, in which many tons of ammunition must have been wasted and which must have sounded like the battle of Bull Run, the Union forces withdrew and went back to their high look out on top of the mountain. Captain Morgan when he wrote thought they had killed or wounded upwards of two hundred and because of the fact that the advance of the Union army had been prevented, that one the most important engagements of the war had been fought and won.

As soon as we have the opportunity and the permission, we will print this report of one of the three important battles fought in this county, together with the map. Captain Morgan was one of the Morgantown Morgans. His father seems to have been stationed in Richmond as warden of the penitentiary, and this may account for the fact that he was a West Pointer and a Confederate.

Of late years there is a way to go across the height of land in West Virginia in the night time in a Pullman sleeper. It hikes out of Charleston at eight forty pip emma, and passes a like train in the night. The other night it was dark, gloomy, and rainy at the mouth of Elk, but the Pullman in charge of the Count of Senegambia shone like a good deed in a naughty world. I had been able to secure a spar deck only and I very much prefer the lower bunks. A number of ladies that I have known say that they would rather sleep in the upper, but I think that choice is somewhat of a complex. But we are all supposed to have descended from people who slept in trees, and when you once get yourself laid upon the upper shelf it is not so bad. True the swaying of the train might roll a person out into the aisles, but there is where our tree training comes in. We catch and ward subconsciously against such a disaster as falling out of a tree in our sleep and also out of the narrow cell in which the well known Pullman lays us. There is room to take deep breathe in the upper berth and to turn on a nice little night light and read or slumber. There is a coat hanger, and a peg for the hat, and a net for shoes and collar, and all the comforts of a lodging for the night. You need a ladder that the Count brings you to climb up, but you can come down without it by taking hold of the other berth across the aisle and trusting to gravity. The other night the rain pounded on the roof and I read a book as we went roaring up Elk River, along the Little Kanawha and down Tygart's Valley and tributaries thereof, to hear the engines fussing around in the yards at Grafton. The establishment of this train now two years in the service has done much to reconcile the northern part of the State to its southern capital city. Two years ago at Morgantown a number of the B. & O. officials came to a meeting at the University and some one said why not put on a night service to Charleston, and before the sun had set the new train had been ordered. It leaves Morgantown in the evening and follows the river to the mouth of Buckhannon River and runs up it until it comes to the place where the old Coal and Coke crossed. Then across the divide to the Little Kanawha, and from it to Elk River and with its meanders to Charleston.

This cross word puzzle craze can render a car full of folks oblivious to time and place. It makes the atmosphere of the car very clubby. I am not strong for it myself for it seems to me that it is just the kind of work that is required to produce children of the brain, and that when the puzzle is once worked, that there is nothing added to the sum of human knowledge.

Another thing. Americans have been noted for their laconic manner of speech as compared to the redundancy of the English. The English are the finest speakers in the world and their use of words is the wonder of the world. But after they have adorned their sentences with all the flowers of speech of which they are so capable, in the last analysis they have not said much more than if they have nodded in the wind.

The other evening in a chair car practically every person in the car was engaged with a cross word puzzle. All but one of the puzzles were from the pages of newspapers but one lady who was a begger for punishment produced a bound book full of the night-mares.

Presently she announced that one of the puzzles was worked but that a word had been forced on the closing that did not sound like a word. It was tor. I answered up like a prize scholar and said that it was a word and that I had a tor at home. That it was part of a brae. She said that the key said that it was the top part of a hill, and a brae is a hill, it was agreed that the word was the one called for. So mark the prediction, this cross word puzzle craze is going to make for redundancy of speech in America.

The making of these puzzles seems to be in the hands of persons who are not the best of lexicographers and some of the definitions or synonyms are not apt or fair. I heard of one word that appeared to be of six letters and commenced with a t and ended with a t and was another word for mousetrap. This appeared was to suggest the word tom-cat to the mind.

This puzzle working seems to take the place of needlework with the beautiful ladies, and cards, tobacco, and the unwritten history of the world with the men folks.

It is good deal like building a poem in that you have to search the storehouse of your memory for words that mean the same but are of different dimensions. Maybe all these puzzle workers will develop into poets in the course their intensive training and presently great floods of poetry will be produced, and this will usher in another golden age of poesy such as most thinkers have despaired of seeing.

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This 30th day of December, 1924.

J. E. Buckley, Comr.

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